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NEA	CU	INR
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AGR	COM	FRB
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TR	XMB	AIR
ARMY	CIA	NAVY
OSD	USIA	NSA

EXCISE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
AIRGRAM

P780-1264-1254

A-36

SECRET

HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State
DEPT PASS: Managua, San Jose, San Salvador, Tegucigalpa
E.O. 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: PINS, SHUM, PINT, ASEC, GT

FROM : Amembassy GUATEMALA DATE: April 13, 1978
SUBJECT: Monthly Report on Political Violence and
Human Rights: February 1978
REF

SUMMARY: BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. The Government kicked off a highly publicized campaign to combat subversion and terrorism at the beginning of February. Nonetheless, the incidence of violence and fatalities rose considerably in February over the average for recent months. Twenty-nine persons died and three disappeared in some 35 incidents of probable political motivation. A number of these incidents (such as some of the sugar cane fires) were possibly not politically related. A number of incidents causing property damage were related to election campaigning, but there were no fatalities. The EGP, which denounced the elections, was notably quiet. The FAR mysteriously surfaced in a shootout in Guatemala City, but PGT propaganda leaflet bombs, common in recent months, were absent.

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AMB
DCM
ECON
R.Shuler
AID
F.Schieck
DAO
MILGP
RSO
CHRON

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. The Minister of Government denied Amnesty International charges of large scale government-condoned violence in Guatemala.

On the brighter side, industrialist Luis Arimany, kidnapped 86 days earlier, was released after ransom was supposedly paid. His captors and their motives are unknown, but the best guess is that they were common felons. END SUMMARY

BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. Probable Guerrilla Activity. At the beginning of February, the government announced a campaign to combat

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Drafted by: POL:RFK/mej
Clearances: POL:AMIsaacs POL:VHBlocker
Contents and Classification Approved by: DCM:GRANDREWS

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDG/MR

REVIEWED BY: DATE: 1 Oct 1978
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

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subversion and terrorism. Part of the campaign was carried out through publicity releases (explaining government efforts in this area and pointing out how the guerrillas act against the interests of Guatemala), apparently with the cooperation of the press. Editorials also appeared denouncing terrorism. One, for instance, pointed out the important role ex-Foreign Minister Roberto Herrera played currently in society as a businessman and philanthropist in contradistinction to the accusation made against him by his EGP captors.

[REDACTED]

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BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. Of the incidents in February, only one was officially attributed to the EGP. This was the shooting of the chief of comisionados militares for Nebaj municipality (El Quiché Department) and his driver. Police claim the guerrillas then painted the letters 'EGP' on the chief's jeep, then fled. In two other incidents guerrillas were suspected of involvement. Near Los Amates, Izabal Department, security forces encountered presumed guerrillas. After a firefight the police found three bodies and some arms supplies. The rest of the group escaped. In Retalhuleu Department, a farm manager/comisionado militar was slain. He had earlier reported receiving threats from "subversive organizations." No EGP announcements have appeared since the Herrera/Domínguez exchange in January (Guatemala 0602).

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BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. Three members of the FAR exchanged fire with police in Guatemala City. Two members of the FAR (university students) were killed. They were later identified as having been arrested in 1976 for distributing FAR propaganda.

[REDACTED]

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One policeman was killed and six persons wounded. END
CONFIDENTIAL.

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. Men in "olive green uniforms" tortured and killed a 36-year-old landowner in Escuintla. Others burned 30 manzanas (a manzana is 1.7 acres) of sugar cane in Escuintla; \$40,000 of cane, cacao and coffee in Suchitipéquez; and a sugar cane plantation in Suchitipéquez belonging to a former deputy chief of the Air Force.

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BEGIN SEC
Officials

[REDACTED] In San Marcos Department, two brothers DOMINGO, 25 and 13, were found dead with signs of torture. Relatives said that they, together with Juan Carreto (17), whose body was subsequently found, had been taken away by eight Mobile Military Police (PMAs). Later on, the PMAs reportedly told a relative trying to locate the brothers that the three had been freed some time earlier. END SECRET.

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BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. Angel Miguel PEREZ Chávez was arrested on January 18 in San Mateo, Quezaltenango Department, for a relatively minor offense. On February 17, his parents located him in jail in Guatemala City suffering from headaches. He was hospitalized, and died four days later. According to the family, Pérez complained of repeated torture. The autopsy report said he died of (contagious) meningitis. The coffin had been ordered sealed, thus preventing further investigation.

President Laugerud and the Minister of Defense ordered an investigation into the alleged maltreatment of a reporter by the military in Retalhuleu. The reporter was photographing families who had appeared at a military camp to complain of the impressment of relatives into military service. The reporter was detained and his camera confiscated. His camera was later returned and he received an apology.

The following two incidents relate to the phenomenon of complicity by lower echelon enforcement officials in crimes, although neither had political overtones: A 75-year-old man was robbed of Q.9,000 by an armed band. The man later identified the leader of the gang who, it turned out, was a police detective. The deputy departmental police chief of Quezaltenango was suspended for his part in a murder and is under indictment.

Other Violence. Six other identified persons and nine unidentified persons were killed by persons unknown in circumstances suggesting political motivation. A number of fires were set in sugar cane fields. Some of these may have been politically inspired, but others were

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likely personally motivated, e.g., revenge, insurance, etc. A campesino reported kidnapped in Escuintla has not been heard from.

Election Violence. Five unknown men shot up the radio transmitter of Radio Novedades belonging to the PR/PID candidate for deputy in Zacapa Department. Some time later the MLN headquarters and the home of an MLN mayor in Zacapa were similarly assaulted. The PR office in Cobán, Alta Verapaz Department, was set afire. In Guatemala City, the headquarters of independent mayoral candidate Colonel Abundio Maldonado was shot up. In nearby Mixco, the garage and three cars of a mayoral candidate were set afire, allegedly in retaliation for his refusal to withdraw from the race.

One Victim Released. Luis Arimany, industrialist, was released after being held for 86 days. Reportedly a ransom was paid to persons believed to be common criminals.

Human Rights Atmospherics. Amnesty International published a report in February stating that 113 persons had been executed or "disappeared" in Guatemala during the last four months of 1977 and that some 20,000 Guatemalans had died since 1966 at the hands of paramilitary groups. Guatemalan Minister of Government denied the charges and accused Amnesty International of sympathizing with groups operating outside the law. He stated that the government was trying to reduce violence despite limited resources.

Statistics. Of the 29 deaths, 11 were in the Indian highlands, 7 in the Pacific lowlands, 5 in Izabal, and 3 each in the Oriente and Guatemala City.

WRA
BOSTER

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